

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-36, 39-58, 60-102, and 104-117 are pending, claims 1, 39-41, 53-55, 57, 58, 66-77, 83, 104 106, 113, 115, and 117 having been amended, and claims 37, 38, 59, and 103 having been canceled by way of the present amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, claims 1-18, 20-28, 33-45, 47-63, 65-69, 72-93, 95, 97-99, and 102-117, were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Bahlmann (U.S. Patent No. 6,487,594); claims 19, 46, 64, 94, and 96 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bahlmann in view of Official Notice, and claims 29-32, 70, 71, 100, and 101 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bahlmann in view of Cogger et al. (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0087383, hereinafter Cogger). For reasons discussed below, this rejection is respectfully traversed.

The undersigned appreciatively acknowledges the interview granted by Examiners Dinh and Zhong on October 5, 2004. At this interview, Examiners Dinh and Zhong agreed to withdraw the finality of the outstanding Office Action dated September 10, 2004 in light of a misunderstanding in an interview conducted on August 4, 2004 between the undersigned and Examiner Zhong in a related case (U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/784,068) regarding the teaching of Bahlmann. Accordingly, as reflected in the Interview Summary, Examiner Zhong has agreed to consider Applicants' response to the outstanding Office Action.

Applicants respectfully traverse the characterization of Bahlmann at ¶ 120 of the outstanding Office Action. In particular, as explained in further detail below, Applicants maintain their contention that the regional systems in the system of Bahlmann are regional operations of the same MSO company. This distinction is critical in light of the structural

and functional differences required by the presently claimed invention to provide a system for maintaining a common network to connect end-users to different systems of different service providers.

Bahlmann depicts a policy management system through which a single Internet service provider (ISP) can offer Internet services to its subscribers in different regions.

Bahlmann discusses a system having regional policy databases and a central policy database operable with the regional policy databases to allow that single ISP to manage and inter-relate the components of their regional operations as well as the differences between the regional operations. Bahlmann only refers to providing such a method and system for a single ISP.

Bahlmann is rife with examples that make clear that the system is for use by a single company as a way of enforcing consistency across that single company's different regional offices. As one point of clarification, Applicants respectfully submit that the phrase "Multiple System Operator," or "MSO," is a term of art that refers to a type of organization that provides various communication services, and is not used to refer multiple organizations.¹ Accordingly, the MSO in Bahlmann is a single company, and not multiple companies. Moreover, Applicants respectfully submit that each of the regional operations described in Bahlmann refers to a regional operation of the same MSO.

The following non-exhaustive list provides excerpts from Bahlmann that support Applicants' contention that the system described therein is for use by a single organization having one or more regional operations, and does not describe a system that can manage a common network that connects end-users to multiple different service providers, as required by the pending claims:

¹ Even Bahlmann recognizes that an MSO is a type of organization, and not multiple organization. Bahlmann states that MSO stands for "multiple subscriber organization." Bahlmann, col. 3, lines 5-6. However, Applicants respectfully submit that the commonly understood meaning of MSO in the art is "Multiple System Operator." This distinction does not impact Applicants' argument that an MSO is a type of an organization.

a. "... the present invention provides a policy management system for ***an Internet service provider having a plurality of Internet servers in different regions.***" Bahlmann at col. 2, lines 6-8 (*emphasis added*);

b. "The product objects define products supported by ***the Internet service provider.*** The feature objects define features of the products supported by ***the Internet service provider.***" *Id.* at col. 2, lines 16-19 (*emphasis added*);

c. "... the present invention provides ***a policy management system for an Internet service provider having a plurality of Internet servers in different regions.***" *Id.* at col. 2, lines 25-27 (*emphasis added*), and

d. "The standardized product requirement means that each product sold by ***the MSO must be the same across the entire MSO. For example, if a basic residential Internet service is offered in any two (or more) regions, the features, cost, etc. of the product must be the same across all regions in which it is being offered.***" *Id.* at col. 4, lines 51-56 (*emphasis added*).

In contrast, the system of the present invention makes use of a third party's common network to provide connectivity between end-users from different service providers and the systems of those different service providers. The common network is not part of one of the infrastructure maintained by the service providers. Accordingly, the owner of the common network has as its customers the different service providers. The end-users that are connected to the different service providers are customers of those service providers, not of the owner of the common network. Unlike the system of Bahlmann, the different service providers are free to offer whatever products and pricing they desire. In the system of the present invention, and in stark contrast to the regional operations in the system of Bahlmann,

the different service provider customers of the operator of the common network are possibly competitors of one another.

The independent claims have been amended by way of the present amendment to highlight certain structural differences between Bahlmann and present invention. For example, independent claim 1 has been amended to require that the network operations support system (OSS) of the common network include a common provisioning mechanism that is used to provision end-users from different service providers onto the common network. In contrast, the system of Bahlmann is structured such that the provisioning of users is distributed to each of the regional operations. Bahlmann, col. 2, line 67-col. 3, line 2 (“Each regional operation 16 has at least one Internet provisioning server for providing Internet service to subscribers.”). Furthermore, independent claim 1 requires that the OSS include a digital repository that is populated with entries including information about end-users of each of the customer service providers. This centralized maintenance of end-users that are customers of disparate service providers is direct contrast to the system in Bahlmann where only the regional operations maintain subscriber information (and only for that region’s subscribers):

Subscriber management system (SMS) database 46 represents the repository of subscriber specific data. SMS database 46 represents the only place where subscriber name, address, billing information, etc. reside. All other systems maintained by the network provider do not contain any duplicate information to that of SMS database 46 except for the account number. The account number is the network providers [sic, provider’s] single reference back to each MSO subscriber.

Bahlmann, col. 6, lines 59-66.

To further emphasize the differences between the system of Bahlmann and the present invention, independent claim 1 has been amended to also require that the OSS include a customer billing mechanism to maintain billing information corresponding to each of the

service providers having end-users connected to the common network. In other words, the customer of the common network is the service provider, not the end-users connected to the service provider via the common network. The operator of the common network bills the service provider. The service provider, in turn, bills its end-user customers. This structural feature of claim 1 is in contrast to the system of Bahlmann that neither teaches nor suggests service providers (even competitor service providers) as paying customers of a provider of a common network that brings end-users to the service provider.

Independent claims 53, 83, and 106 have been similarly amended by way of the present amendment to highlight the structural and functional differences between Bahlmann and the present invention discussed above in the context of claim 1.

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that independent claims 1, 53, 83, and 106 patentably define over Bahlmann. Because claims 2-18, 20-28, 33-36, 39-45, 47-52, and 107-112 depend from claim 1, claims 54-58, 60-63, 65-69, 72-82, and 113-117 depend from claim 53, and claims 84-93, 95, 97-99, 102, 104, and 105 depend from claim 83, it is respectfully submitted that these dependant claims also patentably define over Bahlmann.

Claims 19, 46, 64, 94, and 96 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over Bahlmann in view of Official Notice. The Examiner has provided Sistanizadeh et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,101,182) as support for his conclusion that the use of hybrid fiber co-axial networks for transportation purposes is well known.² However, Applicants respectfully submit that the Official Notice does not teach or suggest what is also lacking in Bahlmann, as discussed above in the context of the independent claims. Therefore, no matter how Bahlmann is combined with the Official Notice taken, the combination fails to teach or suggest the presently claimed invention. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that claims 19, 46,

² Office Action dated September 10, 2004, ¶¶ 92-3.

64, 94, and 96 are patentable over Bahlmann in view of the Official Notice taken in the outstanding Office Action.

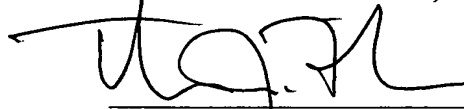
Claims 29-32, 70, 71, 100, and 101 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over Bahlmann in view of Cogger. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Cogger is directed to web-based trouble ticket tracking system through which a user can submit and track the status of a trouble ticket.³ Applicants respectfully submit that Cogger does not teach or suggest what is also lacking in Bahlmann, as discussed above in the context of the independent claims. Therefore, no matter how Bahlmann is combined with Cogger, the combination fails to teach or suggest the presently claimed invention. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that claims 29-32, 70, 71, 100, and 101 are patentable over Bahlmann in view of Cogger.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment, and in light of the above comments, Applicants respectfully submit that the invention defined by claims 1-36, 39-58, 60-102, and 104-117 is patentably distinguished from the prior art. An early and favorable reconsideration of this application is therefore respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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³ See, e.g., Cogger at p. 2, ¶ 18.